Chapter 36 Blue Roses and Red Nails

...CONSORT GYOKUYO'S PREGNANCY WAS ALL BUT ASSURED.
JUST AS WE WERE SEEING THE FIRST SIGNS OF SPRING...
TODDLE よた
TODDLE よた
TODDLE よた
HER LUNAR CYCLE HAD YET TO RESUME, AND SHE COULDN'T SHAKE HER LISTLESSNESS.
SHE WAS ALSO RELIEVING HERSELF MORE OFTEN, AND HER BODY TEMPERATURE WAS SLIGHTLY WARMER THAN USUAL.
AND...
GRIN
...SOMETHING FASCINATING HAPPENED WITH HER DAUGHTER.

HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE...
SO CUUUUTE!
...IT MIGHT BE TIME TO HAVE ONE OF MY OWN...
DOES SHE KNOW THERE'S A BABY IN THERE?
EXCEP-TIONALLY COMPETENT PEOPLE HAVE IT ROUGH TOO.
...I HAVE A FEELING SHE WOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE, GIVEN THAT ONLY A VERY SELECT FEW SERVE HERE AT THE JADE PALACE.
EVEN IF SOMEONE PROPOSED MARRIAGE TO HONG-NIANG...
...THE DAYS SEEM TO BE FLYING BY HERE, PERHAPS BECAUSE I FEEL MORE FULFILLED...
...IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
THERE, THERE.
WHILE THE TWO MONTHS I SPENT AT JINSHI'S FELT ABSURDLY LONG...
ぽてっ
POOMF

BLUE ROSES...
...YOU SAY?
UM...
YOU DO KNOW I'M AN APOTH-ECARY, DON'T YOU?
IS HE ASKING ME TO FIND HIM SOME?
...SO IT'S UP TO ME TO PRESENT THEM FOR THAT PURPOSE.
MM.
EVERY-ONE'S QUITE KEEN TO ADMIRE THEM...

IF SUCH A THING WERE MAKING THE ROUNDS, IT WOULD BRING THE COUNTRY TO ITS KNEES!
PERHAPS THE PEOPLE CLAIMING TO HAVE SEEN THEM WERE USING OPIUM AT THE TIME, AND THEY HALLUCINATED THE BLUE ROSES?
...BUT BLUE ROSES DO NOT EXIST FROM WHAT I'VE BEEN TOLD.
...I'M NOT COMPLETELY IGNORANT ON THE SUBJECT OF ROSES...
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD ANYTHING OF THE SORT?
IT SEEMS THEY ONCE GREW ON PALACE GROUNDS LONG AGO.

AHEM!
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO DO?
SO BLUE ROSES ARE OUT OF THE QUES-TION?

SIR JINSHI.
...NEXT MONTH ...?
I WANT TO PRESENT THEM AT NEXT MONTH'S GARDEN BANQUET.

ROSES WILL NOT BE IN SEASON FOR AT LEAST ANOTHER TWO MONTHS.

HE DIDN'T KNOW, DID HE?
...

SIGH
...I'LL THINK OF A WAY TO TELL THEM IT CAN'T BE DONE.
VERY WELL. I'LL TAKE ON THIS TASK.
...YES.
THAT'S RIGHT.
THAT REACTION ...
THESE ROSES...
DID A CERTAIN TACTICIAN ASK YOU FOR THEM?
ALWAYS RUNNING FROM HIM IS STARTING TO GET ON MY NERVES NOW.
IF THIS IS HOW IT'S GOING TO BE, I'LL SMASH THAT STUPID MONOCLE INTO HIS SMIRKING FACE.

ARE YOU SURE?
YES.
I CAN'T PROMISE SUCCESS ...
...BUT I'LL DO WHAT I CAN.
...AND SO, SIR...
...I'LL NEED YOU TO MAKE A FEW ARRANGE-MENTS ON MY BEHALF.
THE CRYSTAL PALACE
A SAUNA WAS CONSTRUCTED HERE WHEN CONSORT LIHUA FELL ILL...
...TO HELP DRAW THE TOXINS OUT OF HER BODY.

IT'S A GOOD THING I SENT AWAY FOR A NEW MANUAL FROM THE BROTHEL TO GIVE AS TRIBUTE.
THIS ONE'S A FAVORITE OF THE EMPEROR'S.
I DIDN'T EXPECT THE CONSORT WOULD SO READILY AGREE.
WITH JINSHI'S HELP, I GOT PERMIS-SION TO USE IT.
I SPECIFIED SEVERAL VARIETIES WITH EARLY BLOOMS.
WE'VE BROUGHT IN OVER A HUNDRED ROSE BUSHES.
THE SAUNA'S STEAM FLOWS INTO THIS HASTILY BUILT CABIN.
THERE ARE WINDOWS IN THE WALLS AND ON THE CEILING SO THAT LIGHT CAN EASILY STREAM IN.
HUFF
HUFF
ON SUNNY DAYS, I TAKE THEM OUTSIDE SO THEY CAN BASK IN THE SUN.
POUR
ON COLD DAYS, I KEEP THE STEAM GOING THROUGH THE NIGHT.
THAT EUNUCH MUST BE ROLLING IN IT...
...IF HE CAN HAVE A BUILDING LIKE THIS BUILT JUST TO GROW ROSES.

...THE WOUND ON MY LEG KEPT OPENING UP.
WITH ALL THE MOVING AROUND, THOUGH...
...BUT I SEE TO THE TEMPERATURE IN HERE MYSELF...
...SINCE I DON'T WANT THE PLANTS TO WITHER.
SIZZLE
わぁ！
JINSHI DISPATCHED SEVERAL EUNUCHS TO ASSIST ME...
...TO KEEP AN EYE ON ME.
...AND TO MY SURPRISE, ASSIGNED XIAOLAN...
GAO SHUN TOOK ONE LOOK AT ME BLEEDING EVERYWHERE...
SHE WAS MORE THAN HAPPY TO HELP SINCE IT MEANT SHE GOT TO SKIP OUT ON HER WORK AND EAT SNACKS.
LEMME HELP!
MAO-MAO!
HOW'S THE LEG?

FLOWERS HAVE SET SEASONS IN WHICH THEY BLOOM.
BUT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THEY BLOOM OUT OF SEASON.
RIGHT NOW, I'M TRYING TO CONFUSE THESE ROSES INTO BLOOMING AHEAD OF SCHEDULE.
BUT THERE'S NO GUARANTEE THEY'LL BLOOM IN LESS THAN A MONTH.
AND THIS IS BACK-BREAKING WORK.
SIGH...
OH!
MAO-MAO, LOOK!

WHIP
A BUD!

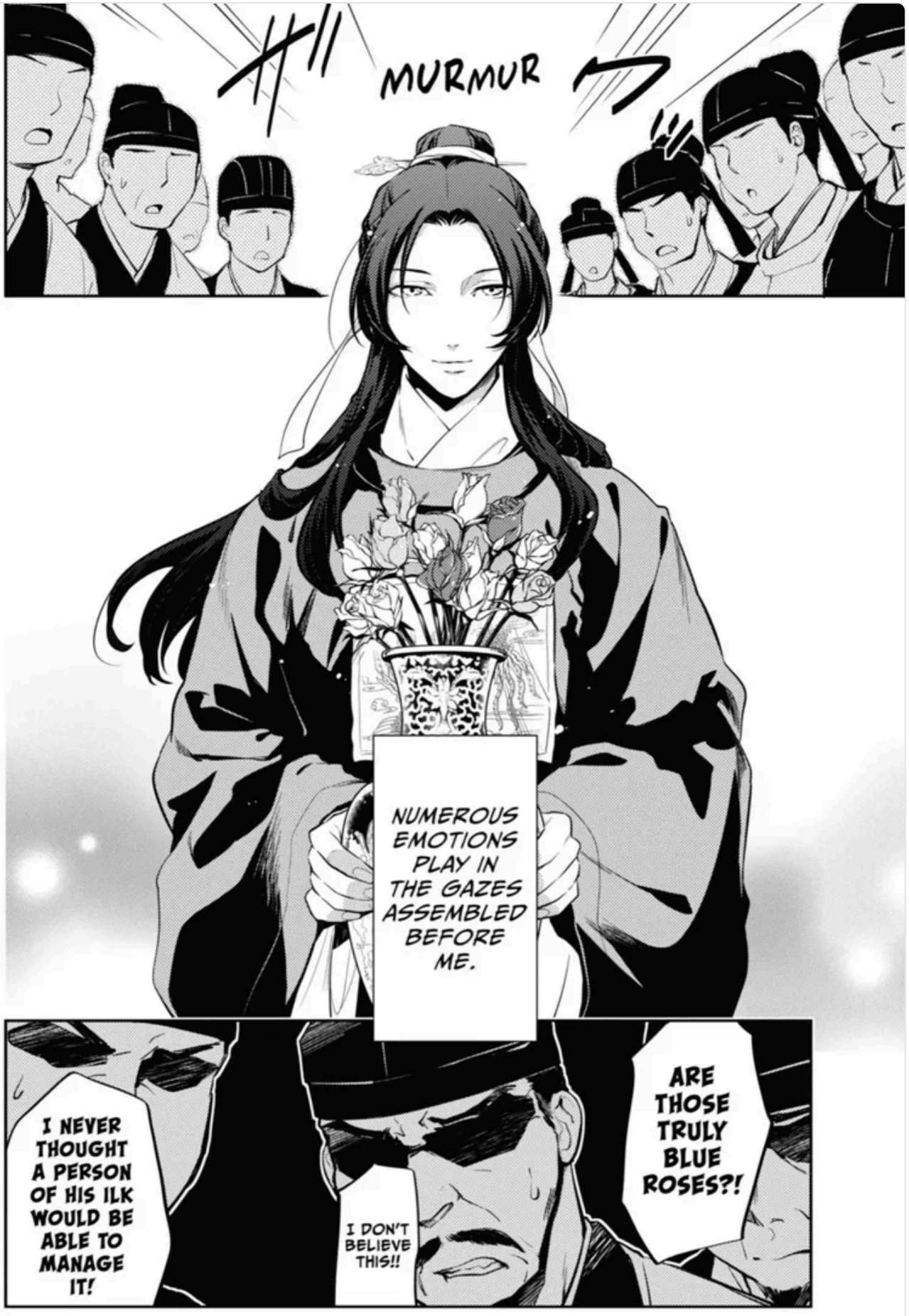
JUST AS ALL SEEMED WELL...
SNEAK こそ
SNEAK こそ
UGH, ANNOY-ING.
...THE LADIES OF THE CRYSTAL PALACE BEGAN TO HANG AROUND FROM TIME TO TIME.
WHETHER THIS WAS OUT OF GENUINE CURIOSITY OR JUST TO TEST THEIR METTLE BY INVITING A SCARE, I CAN'T SAY.
THERE, ALL DONE.
OOOH!

SO THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO "DO YOUR NAILS"!
JUST LIKE SOCIETY AT LARGE, THE INNER COURT HAS ITS TRENDS TOO.
AND IT'S THE EMPEROR'S FAVORITE CONSORTS WHO DECIDE WHAT THEY'RE TO BE.
SMIRK
THE TOP CONSORTS DO THIS TOO, DON'T THEY?!
TWITCH
NOW, THE LADIES OF THE CRYSTAL PALACE SHOULD BE TOO DISTRACTED BY DOING THEIR NAILS...
...TO BE A REGULAR NUISANCE AT MY IMPROMPTU ROSE NURSERY.
IT'S NOT ODD FOR LADIES-IN-WAITING...
...TO WANT TO COPY THE CONSORTS THEY ADMIRE SO MUCH.

WHAT A WASTE OF TIME.
BACK TO WORK. BACK TO WORK!
COME, NOW!
PAINTED NAILS ARE A COMMON SIGHT IN THE PLEASURE DISTRICT.
THAT'S PROBABLY WHY YOU DON'T SEE THEM MUCH IN HERE.
JUST AS DOING ONE'S NAILS BECAME THE RAGE AMONG THE LADIES OF THE INNER COURT...
...THE ROSEBUDS BEGAN TO SWELL, AND ALL THEIR PETALS WERE WHITE.
135

THIS YEAR'S SPRING GARDEN BANQUET IS BEING HELD AMONG SPRING PEONIES.
THE WIND IS STRONG, AND IT'S COLD...
...SO THE PARTY IS TAKING PLACE A BIT LATER IN THE YEAR THAN USUAL.
CONSORT GYOKUYO, WHOSE PREG-NANCY HAS BEGUN TO SHOW...
...WON'T BE IN ATTEN-DANCE.
SHE FORMALLY GAVE HER SEAT TO CONSORT LOULAN IN WELCOME.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU ACTUALLY MANAGED TO PULL IT OFF.
THERE WASN'T ENOUGH TIME FOR THEM TO BLOOM, THOUGH.
HAGGARD
げそっ

IT'S FINE.
THESE ARE SO STUNNING, I DON'T THINK ANYONE WILL MIND.
I'LL TAKE OVER FROM HERE. GO GET SOME REST.


MURMUR
NUMEROUS EMOTIONS PLAY IN THE GAZES ASSEMBLED BEFORE ME.
I NEVER THOUGHT A PERSON OF HIS ILK WOULD BE ABLE TO MANAGE IT!
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!!
ARE THOSE TRULY BLUE ROSES?!

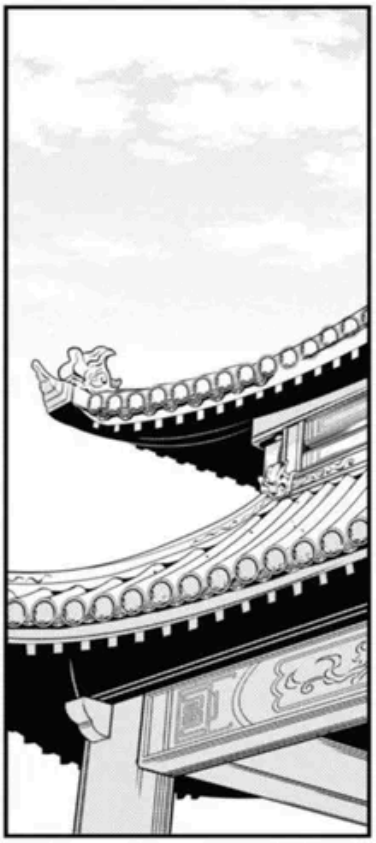
MY LOOKS MAY BE EXCEP-TIONAL...
...BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO MAKE ALL THESE OFFICIALS TAKE KINDLY...
...TO A YOUNG EUNUCH SHOWING OFF.
BUT...
...I'M MORE THAN CAPABLE OF HANDLING WHATEVER IDEAS THEY GET INTO THEIR HEADS.
BUT THE WORST OF ALL IS...

...THE MAN WITH THE UNREAD-ABLE GAZE.
SHI SHO.
CONSORT LOULAN'S FATHER, NEWLY ARRIVED AT THE PALACE.
HE ENJOYED THE FAVOR OF THE PREVIOUS EMPEROR'S MOTHER WHEN SHE WAS EMPRESS.
AT THIS POINT, THE CURRENT EMPEROR IS NO MATCH FOR HIM.
I CAN'T READ HIM.
AND THAT'S WHY...
...I HAVE TO KEEP UP THE SMILEY YOUNG EUNUCH ACT.
PFFT!
140

HEH.
HEH.
?
GLANCE
チラッ
BFFT!!
OOOH!

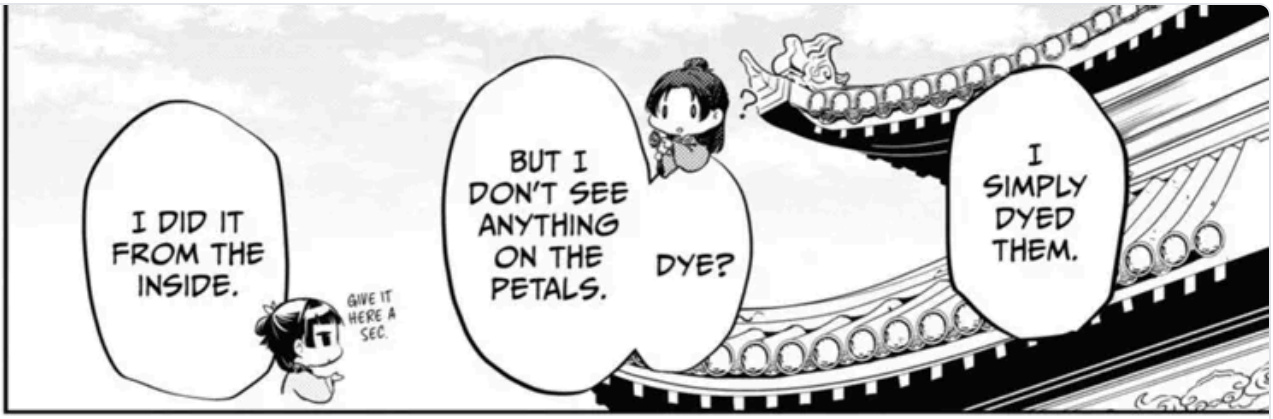
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
GRIMACE
WHY CAN THAT MAN NEVER RESIST THE URGE TO BE RUDE?
FWUMP
DROP
I SEEMED TO HAVE GRABBED SOMEONE'S CAP AND WIG WHILE HALF ASLEEP.
PFFFT...

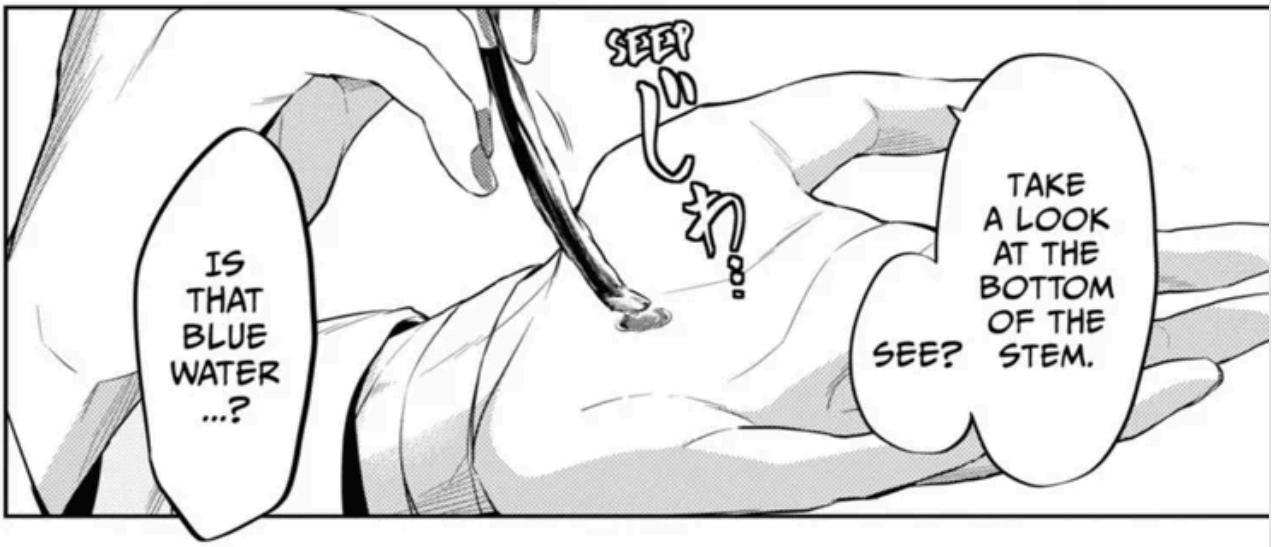
THE ROSES I WAITED SUCH A LONG TIME FOR...
...ARE A VARIETY OF HUES, AS IF FLAUNTING THEIR BEAUTY...
...AND REFLECTING THE AWFUL PERSONALITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ARRANGED THEM.

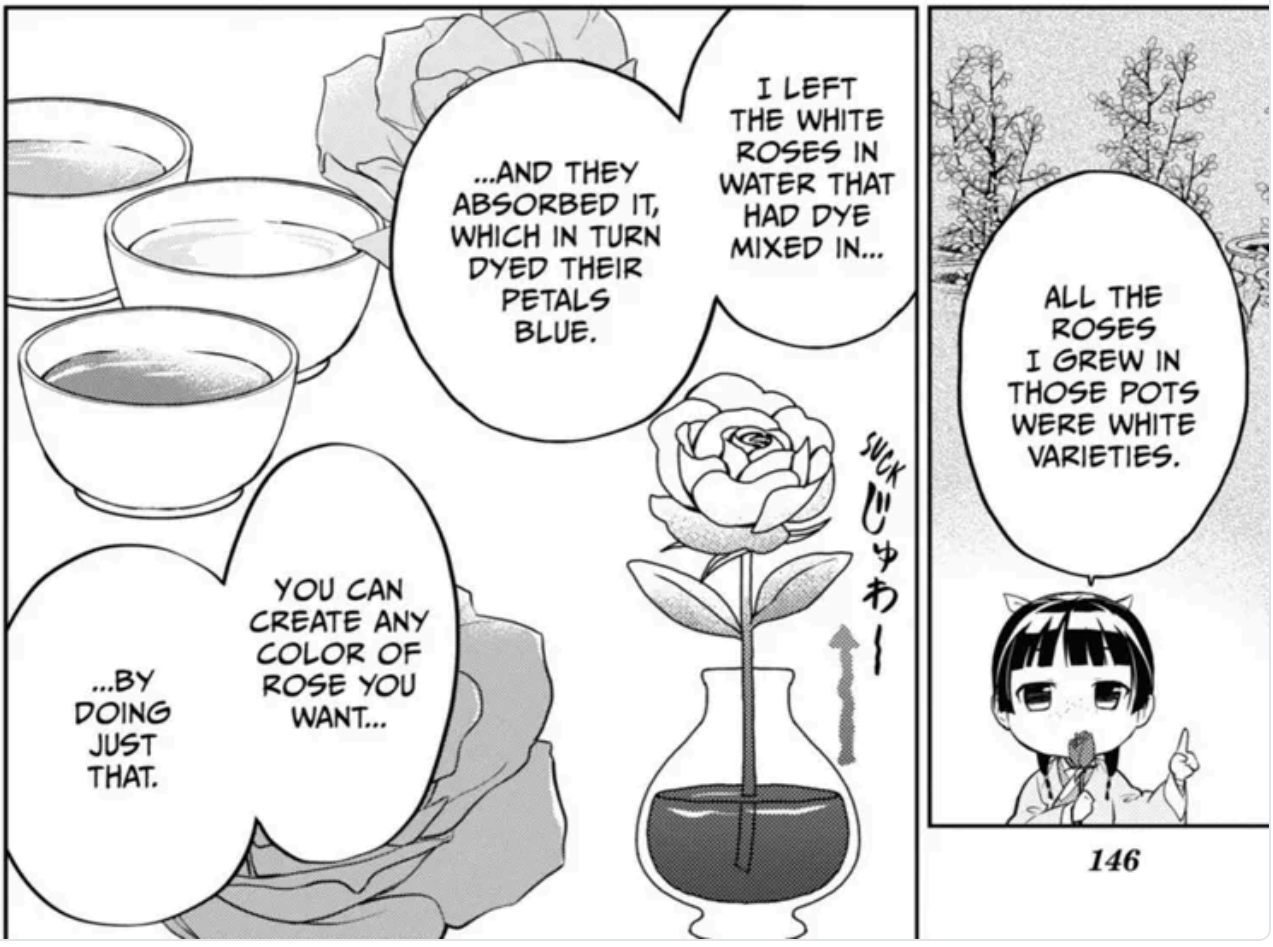


144

SHE'S AWAKE ...?
MAO-MAO.
YOU MUSTN'T GO BACK TO THE CRYSTAL PALACE EVER AGAIN.
EVERY TIME YOU GO THERE, YOU COME BACK SO EXHAUSTED.
FLUTTER
HEE HEE HEE!
FLUTTER
YOU CAN STAY SEATED.
SO HOW IN THE WORLD DID YOU DO IT?


I DID IT FROM THE INSIDE.
GIVE IT HERE A SEC.
BUT I DON'T SEE ANYTHING ON THE PETALS.
DYE?
I SIMPLY DYED THEM.


SEE?
IS THAT BLUE WATER ...?
SEE?
TAKE A LOOK AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STEM.


I LEFT THE WHITE ROSES IN WATER THAT HAD DYE MIXED IN...
...AND THEY ABSORBED IT, WHICH IN TURN DYED THEIR PETALS BLUE.
SUCK
YOU CAN CREATE ANY COLOR OF ROSE YOU WANT...
...BY DOING JUST THAT.
ALL THE ROSES I GREW IN THOSE POTS WERE WHITE VARIETIES.

THE WORK OF SOME LAYABOUT WHO HAD NOTHING BETTER TO DO THAN SOAK ROSES IN BLUE WATER ALL DAY LONG, NO DOUBT.
THEN WHAT OF THE RUMOR THAT BLUE ROSES USED TO GROW HERE?
...HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE?
I PLUCKED OFF THE LEAVES THAT HAD TURNED DARK...
...AND WRAPPED EACH OF THE STEMS IN COTTON SOAKED WITH BLUE WATER, WHICH I LEFT ON RIGHT UP TO THE DAY OF THE BANQUET.
IT TOOK SOME DOING...
...BUT THE HARDEST PART WAS GETTING THE ROSES TO BLOOM IN THE FIRST PLACE.
PLUCK
もぎ
もぎ
PLUCK
WHO KNOWS.
PERHAPS THEY NEEDED SOMETHING WITH WHICH TO IMPRESS A LADY.

OH, THAT'S NEW!
YOU DYED YOUR FINGER-NAILS?
YES.
I CAN'T SAY IT SUITS ME, THOUGH.
IF ONLY I HAD ROSE BALSAM AND WOOD-SORREL...
THE COMMON NAME FOR ROSE BALSAM IS NAIL RED...
...WHILE WOOD-SORREL IS CALLED CAT'S PAW.
BY CRUSHING AND MIXING THE TWO TOGETHER, WOODSORREL MAKES THE RED OF ROSE BALSAM EVEN BRIGHTER.

IT STILL LOOKS NICE, DESPITE THAT.
BUT...
...WHILE I DID MANAGE TO DO A GOOD JOB OF DYING MY NAILS, MY LEFT PINKY NAIL STILL HAS A WRINKLE IN IT.
GAO SHUN.
DID YOU TAKE CARE OF WHAT I ASKED FOR?
IT IS DONE.
UGH!
じぃ STAAARE
ACK!
UH-OH.
I'VE STILL GOT WORK TO DO.

149

THE STAGE HAS BEEN SET.
ALL THAT'S LEFT TO DO NOW IS TAKE THAT DISAGREE-ABLE MAN BY SURPRISE.
YOU HAVE MY THANKS.
SHP
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
AND I CAN'T BE BOTHERED TO SUMMON ANY KIND OF EMOTION FOR THINGS THAT DON'T INTEREST ME.
NONE OF IT HOLDS MY INTEREST.
ALLEGEDLY BEAUTIFUL CONSORTS.
LULLING MUSIC.
FANCY CUISINE AND THE REEK OF WINE.

THAT BORING BANQUET IS OVER AT LAST.
MOST PEOPLE'S FACES APPEAR AS GO STONES TO ME.
MILITARY ACQUAINTANCES ARE MERE ELEPHANT-CHESS PIECES, AT BEST.
MOST START OUT AS PAWNS AND SOLDIERS, AND AS THEY GO UP THE RANKS, BECOME HORSES AND SUCH.
Horse
Minister
Pawn
Soldier
Soldier
Elephant
AS A TACTICIAN, I SIMPLY...
...PUT THOSE PIECES IN THE SPOTS THEY'RE MEANT TO GO.
I WIN NEARLY EVERY BATTLE BY PUTTING THE RIGHT PERSON IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

相
仕
THAT OFFICIAL PIECE WITH THE SMILE OF A DIVINE NYMPH (OR SO I'M TOLD).
IT'S EASY TO PICK HIM OUT SINCE HE'S ALWAYS FOLLOWED BY THAT MINISTER PIECE.
STILL, TO THINK THAT NOTHING CAME OF MY PROV-OCATION...
I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO MAKE MY DIS-PLEASURE FELT BY ANNOYING MY USUAL TARGET.
キョロ LOOK
キョロ LOOK
AH, IT'S THE RED OF PAINTED NAILS.
I KEEP SEEING RED TODAY, AND IT'S MAKING MY EYES HURT.
CHK
I CAN'T STAND BEING AROUND SO MANY PEOPLE.
CHK

THEY'RE SOFTLY DYED IN SHADES OF ROSE BALSAM.
...AREN'T SUCH A GARISH RED.
THE PAINTED NAILS IN MY MEMORY ...

相
仕

SHP
WOULD YOU CARE TO BE MY OPPONENT?

ELEPHANT CHESS?
HOW COULD I POSSIBLY REFUSE SUCH A REQUEST FROM MY DEAR DAUGHTER, I ASK YOU?
SHALL I GIVE YOU A HANDI-CAP?
PERHAPS REMOVE A HORSE OR CHARIOT?
WE'LL PLAY FIVE GAMES USING THE STANDARD RULES.
WHOEVER WINS THREE TIMES WILL BE THE VICTOR.
WHY DON'T YOU JUST TAKE IT?
THAT WILL NOT BE NECES-SARY.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, LET'S DECIDE THE PRIZE.
STRAIGHT TO THE POINT. I LIKE IT!
IF I WIN, I SHALL HAVE YOU BACK, DAUGHTER.
SHP
.....!

BUT...!
RGH!
REMEMBER, YOU PROMISED TO STAY OUT OF IT!
YOU ARE ...?
I SAY!
YOU MEAN YOU'RE ACTUALLY WORKING FOR HIM?
I AM, INDEED.
VERY WELL.
HOWEVER, AS I AM CURRENTLY EMPLOYED, YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL MY CONTRACT ENDS.
GRIIIN
OOH...

AND IF I WIN...
WHAT COULD SHE BE UP TO?
...YOU WILL BUY OUT THE CONTRACT OF ONE OF THE COURTESANS FROM VERDIGRIS.
...BUT I KNOW THE OLD MADAM IS ITCHING TO CLEAR OUT ONE OF THE GIRLS GETTING LONG IN THE TOOTH.
I WON'T NAME ANY NAMES...

IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, MY DEAR, I ACCEPT.
SO THAT'S HOW IT IS.
LEER
IS THAT ALL?
I ALSO WISH TO INTRO-DUCE TWO RULES.
GO ON.
THUNK
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
OKAY, THEN.
160

MANY CUPS
キュポン POP
とぽぽぽ… GLUG GLUG GLUG
THAT MUST BE SOME KIND OF SERIOUS SPIRIT IF THE SMELL IS ANYTHING TO GO BY...
HEE HEE!
スHP
I'VE GOT A REALLY BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.
WHAT'S THAT?

DRINK THREE DOSES, THOUGH, AND IT BECOMES A DEADLY POISON.
IF YOU TAKE A LITTLE, IT'S JUST MEDICINE.
しゃばばば FWOOSH
THEN I'LL MIX UP THE CUPS SO YOU CAN'T TELL WHICH ONES IT'S IN.
I'M GOING TO ADD THIS POWDER INTO THREE OF THE FIVE CUPS.
SHE HAS SOMETHING BRUTAL IN MIND.
LOSER
WINNER
THIS ONE
"OKAY!"
ULP!
THAT'S THE FIRST RULE.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO DRAIN THE WHOLE THING. JUST TAKE A SIP.
AFTER EACH GAME, THE WINNER WILL CHOOSE A CUP FOR THE LOSER TO DRINK.

THE SECOND RULE IS...
IF YOU RESIGN FROM A GAME...
...IT WILL BE COUNTED AS A LOSS, NO MATTER THE REASON.

ARE WE AGREED?

...VERY WELL.
IS SHE TRYING TO THROW HIM OFF HIS GAME?
HE'S A MILITARY TACTICIAN WITH A REPUTATION OF BEING AN ODDBALL.
I DOUBT HE'D LOSE HIS COOL OVER SUCH A MINOR ATTEMPT AT UNSETTLING HIM.
BUT LA KAN IS NOT YOUR AVERAGE OPPONENT.
WHAT COULD BE GOING THROUGH THAT HEAD OF HERS ...?

SHE LOST AGAIN.
HA A AH!
THAT'S TWO LOSSES IN A ROW.
くいっ
ぐびっ
165

SINCE SHE CHALLENGED A TACTICIAN WHO IS UNBEATEN AT ELEPHANT CHESS...
...I ASSUMED SHE'D AT LEAST BE SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR WITH THE GAME.
WEH HEH HEH!
BUT SHE CLEARLY ONLY KNOWS THE RULES...
...AND HAS NO ACTUAL EXPERIENCE PLAYING IT.

SHE'S ALREADY DOWN TWO CUPS.
AND SHE DRANK THOSE WITH SUCH JOY ON HER FACE...
...THAT IT'S HARD TO TELL WHETHER OR NOT SHE TOOK ANY POISON.

ASSUMING THE TWO CUPS SHE DRANK WERE TAINTED...
...THERE'S A ONE IN THREE CHANCE THAT HER THIRD CUP WILL FATALLY POISON HER.
THERE'S A ONE IN TEN CHANCE SHE'LL END UP POISONED, OVERALL.

I WONDER HOW MUCH OF THIS LA KAN HAS REALIZED.
...BUT THAT STILL SCARES ME.
I HAVE A FEELING SHE'LL BE OKAY IF SHE GETS POISONED...
THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THEIR ABILITIES IS GLARINGLY OBVIOUS.
CHECK-MATE.

SHE REALLY DOES HAVE HIS GENERAL TRAPPED.
WHAP
YOU GOT ME.
IN-DEED.
WHETHER OR NOT YOUR NEXT CUP IS TAINTED, I CAN'T ALLOW MY DAUGHTER TO CONTINUE RISKING A POISONING.
A WIN IS A WIN, EVEN IF YOU GIFTED ME THE VICTORY.

WHICH WILL YOU PICK FOR ME?
CHOOSE WHICH-EVER ONE YOU'D LIKE.
DOES THE MEDICINE HAVE A TASTE?
YES, A NOTICE-ABLE ONE.
IF THE POISON MUST BE DRUNK THREE TIMES FOR IT TO HAVE A HARMFUL EFFECT...
OH, I GET IT.
...LA KAN CAN AFFORD TO LOSE TWICE.
IF EVEN ONE OF HIS CUPS TASTES ODD...
...HE'LL KNOW THAT HIS DAUGHTER IS SAFE.
TIP
SO HE LOST ON PURPOSE.
THE SLY FOX.

BADUMP
ドキ
BADUMP
ドキ
.....
THIS IS MIGHTY SALTY.
170

ガクッ
SLAM
NOW WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THE THIRD CUP POISONING HER.
BUT THAT ALSO MEANS SHE HAS NO CHANCE OF WINNING.
HOW CAN SHE POSSIBLY TURN THE TIDE?!
AND...
SWAY くわん
SWAY くわん
...I FEEL REAL HOT.
どた
THUD

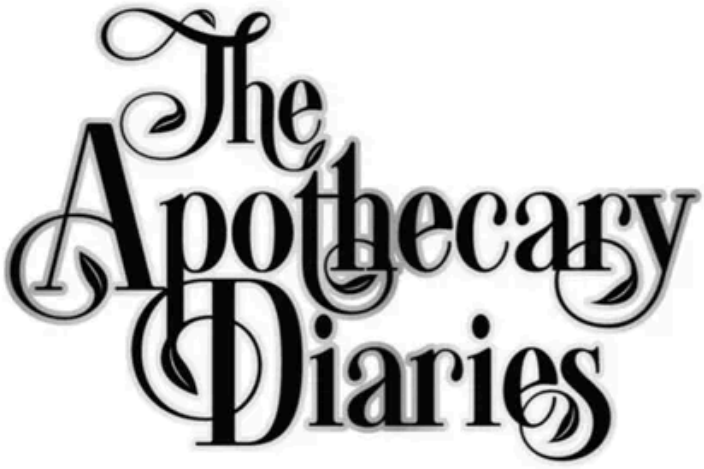
I THOUGHT YOU SAID NOTHING WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU DRANK ONE CUP WITH THE POWDER?
I KNOW YOU HATE THE MAN, BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU ACTUALLY POISONED HIM!
SHP
I HAVEN'T LIED ABOUT ANYTHING. ALCOHOL IS JUST THE BEST MEDICINE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
SIR JINSHI.
キュ DAZED
HE'S ONLY DRUNK.

HUH?
HE DOESN'T DRINK...
...ALCO-HOL.
...NOW THAT YOU MEN-TION IT...
...I'VE ONLY EVER SEEN HIM DRINK THAT JUICE HE CARRIES AROUND HIS WAIST, NEVER ANY ACTUAL ALCOHOL...

THEN WHAT WAS THAT POWDER YOU PUT INTO THE CUPS?
JUST A MIX OF SALT AND SUGAR.
IT MAKES IT EASIER TO ABSORB ALCOHOL.
SO SHE ...
...KNEW FROM THE VERY BEGINNING THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN.
WELL ...
...I'M DONE TREATING HIM.
PAT ぱん
PAT ぱん

THE APOTHECARY DIARIES 7 • End

176


The Apothecary Diaries

Thanks for reading *The Apothecary Diaries*, Volume 7!
When drawing the characters superdeformed, I usually end up making them into animals (Maomao the cat, Li Haku the dog, and so on). In this volume, we saw the quack as a hamster and La Kan as a fox.* I wonder which animals our readers associate the characters with.
From the artist, Nekokurage
SPECIAL THANKS
Adviser
General
Chariot
Cannon
Cannon
Elephant
SPECIAL THANKS.
ASSISTANTS Rie Shirai, Asaha, Shura Yamada, Hamano, Kai Kazaha, Tomiko
COMPLETION Itsuki Nanao
ORIGINAL Natsu Hyuuga Touco Shino
The editor, you, the readers, and everyone else involved!

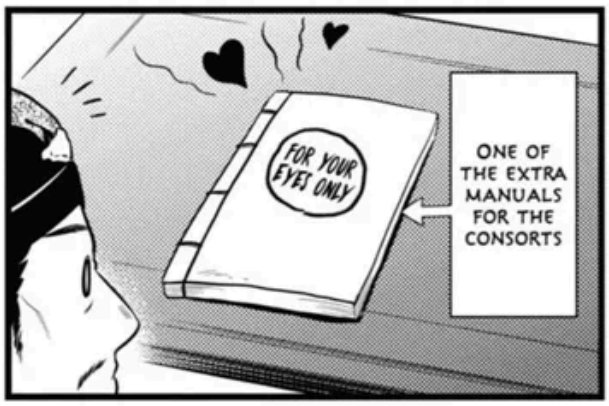
A lot of things happened in Volume 7! Even more will happen in the next volume!
Special Thanks
Author: Natsu Hyuuga
Light novel illustrator: Touco Shino
Manga artist: Nekokurage
The editor
&
You, the readers
Itsuki Nanao

THE PERSON CALLED A QUACK

Story by Itsuki Nanao Art by Nekokurage

THE MAN CALLED THE EMPEROR ①

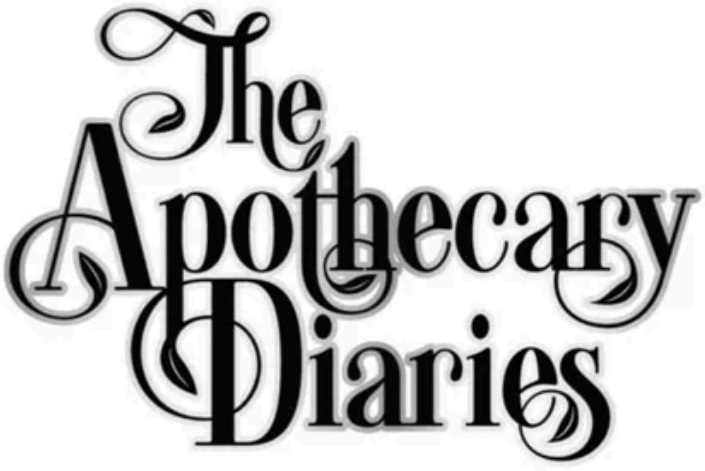
THE MAN CALLED THE EMPEROR ②



Story by Itsuki Nanao *Art by* Nekokurage

Next Volume Preview
VERDIGRIS
LA KAN AWAKENS...
PLEASE CHOOSE WISELY.

Continue reading for a sneak peek at
Volume 8 of The Apothecary Diaries,
coming soon!
The Apothecary Diaries


The Apothecary Diaries

I COULDN'T EVEN TELL MY OWN MOTHER AND WET NURSE APART, LET ALONE MEN AND WOMEN.
EVER SINCE I WAS BORN, I'VE BEEN UNABLE TO TELL PEOPLE APART.
MY MOTHER WAS DESPERATE TO RECAPTURE HIS AFFECTIONS.
MY FATHER WAS SO UPSET BY THIS, HE STARTED SPENDING MORE AND MORE TIME IN THE BED OF HIS MISTRESS.
...I LEARNED TO BOTH PLAY AND LOVE THE GAMES OF GO AND ELEPHANT CHESS...
...AND WAS ABLE TO LIVE AS I PLEASED.
AND SO...
...EVEN THOUGH I WAS BORN THE ELDEST SON OF A NOBLE FAMILY...

MY BRILLIANT UNCLE WAS THE ONE AND ONLY PERSON WHO UNDER-STOOD ME.
IT WAS BECAUSE OF HIM THAT I GRADUALLY GREW TO SEE PEOPLE'S FACES AS GAME PIECES.
I SUPPOSE IT WOULD BE EASIEST TO SEE THEM AS ELEPHANT-CHESS PIECES IN YOUR CASE.
LEARN TO RECOGNIZE PEOPLE NOT BY THEIR FACES, BUT BY THEIR VOICES, MANNERISMS, AND THEIR BODY TYPES.
YOU COULD ALSO LEARN TO CATEGORIZE PEOPLE IN CERTAIN WAYS.
車
CHARIOT
...I WAS AGAIN REMINDED OF HIS GENIUS.
WHEN I BEGAN TO SEE MY UNCLE AS A CHARIOT PIECE...
NO GAME WAS MORE AMUSING THAN ELEPHANT CHESS WITH ACTUAL PEOPLE AS THE PIECES.
THOUGH I'M WEAK, AS LONG AS I CLEVERLY MANIPULATED MY SUBORDI-NATES, IT WAS MORE THAN ENOUGH.
AFTER BECOMING AN ADULT, I WAS UNEXPECTEDLY GIVEN A HIGH-RANKING POST BECAUSE OF MY BIRTH, DESPITE HAVING NO MARTIAL ABILITIES TO SPEAK OF.

...THAT I WOULD FACE OFF AGAINST THE COURTESAN WHOSE NAME WAS ON EVERYONE'S LIPS AT THE BROTHEL I FREQUENTED.
...WHEN IT WAS DECIDED ...
I HAD BEEN LONG UNDEFEATED AT BOTH WORK AND PLAY...
...AMID A SEA OF WHITE AND BLACK.
SHE ALONE STOOD OUT GLORI-OUSLY...
HER NAME...

馬
相
車
仕
...WAS FENG-XIAN.
Chapter 37 Rose Balsam and Woodsorrel ①

...VERSUS ME, THE MILITARY'S UNBEATEN TACTICIAN.
THE BROTHEL'S UNBEATEN COURTE-SAN...
THE SPECTATORS WERE SURE TO BE PLEASED, NO MATTER WHO LOST.
HER MOVES ARE LOGICAL AND SURE.
SHE IS INDEED A COM-PETENT PLAYER.
BUT I'LL MAKE SURE SHE KNOWS HER PLACE.

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE I LAST LOST SO BADLY?
HEH.
HEH.
MURMUR
MURMUR
BY A LAND-SLIDE.
...I LOST.
HA HA HA!
HA AA H!

OH.
SO THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE'S FACES LOOK LIKE?
I SAW ...
...THE UNHAPPY FACE OF A WOMAN WHO SEEMED TO WANT TO TELL ME...
...HOW IRKED SHE WAS BY ME UNDER-ESTIMATING HER.

AN ELEPHANT CHESS BOARD?
CLATTER
NOD
SHE HAS NO CHANCE OF WINNING THIS NEXT GAME.
SMIRK
AND THEN, FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS...
...WE CONTINUED TO MEET, SPENDING OUR TIME TOGETHER DOING NOTHING BUT PLAYING GO AND ELEPHANT CHESS.